15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Stone Age Religion

It is often asked if aboriginals are religious and if there is an aboriginal religion. That 'man is a religious animal' and that he is 'incurably religious' are theories that have been widely accepted. Nevertheless it is surprising to discover the extent of aboriginal religious beliefs. Their beliefs are primitive, yet they include the early forms of most well-known religions, and cover to an astonishing degree much of the content in fundamental religion. Religion may be defined in many terms, but a score or more of these widely varying definitions cover the indefinite scope of aboriginal beliefs. Aboriginal religion is one of 'beginnings', and the sum total of his beliefs resolves itself into a deep well of proto-religion in which is found fetishism, tabu, magic, awe, fear, totemism, and prayer to departed human spirits.

Fetishism includes the belief that supernatural powers may be harnessed by wearing a charm of hair, skin, blood, or bone taken from the body of a dead man.[1] Wandering spirits are feared, the world is full of them and unexplained happenings are attributed to them.[2]

Tabus are carefully observed and ceremonial abstinence is dependent on the fear of definite consequences[3] whilst, because of its negative reaction, Stone Age men refrain from doing certain things for fear of the evil that will come upon them, as when women abstain from eating men's food and from hunting their game during menstruation.[4]

[1] Chapter 3, 'Jungle Love and Etiquette.'
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Chapter 6, 'From Hand to Mouth.'
[4] Chapter 3, 'Jungle Love and Etiquette.'

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1957
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

underlies this most fundamental lateral relationship. Given the correlated basic complex of the junior levirate, by which the next eldest brother inherits a dead man's wife, it would be impossible not to have polygyny; and it is rather difficult to see how the entire system of kinship could exist without the levirate in some form. 605 595

A man always tries to obtain his actual mother's brother's daughter; if he cannot get her, he tries to marry someone as near to her in consanguinity as possible. 605 582

Usually an older male dué and male galle have an understanding that their sons and daughters shall marry. Such a betrothal could occur before the birth of either child. Sometimes a gawel will promise his wife's next daughter to his waku. Thus, even before birth there is a recognized relationship between dué and galle. 605 584

There are several degrees of marriage. As soon as a boy is circumcised and old enough to understand and remember what is told him, his galle is pointed out. At a similar age a galle mielk has her dué diramo shown to her. This is done by the male parents of both children.

The young men and women older than the two usually tease the young couple with somewhat obscene jokes about their relationship and its meaning in their physical behavior. The youngsters are usually shy and ashamed when confronted with such humor; however, as small children, when away from the elders, they play house together. They are fully aware of the sexual act and of sex differences. [831] [864] [857]

About the time facial hair appears upon a boy and the breasts of a girl swell, that is, when sexual intercourse is in their power and of interest to both, they start making love trysts in the bush. They may not copulate at first, but they simulate the act in close contact. 605 835 836

When a girl has her first menses the mother and older women put her inside a house (no special one) and leave her. She is supposed to remain in one place and move with digging sticks as crutches. This represents the myth of the two old women who made the present world, walking with the aid of digging sticks; the older of the two was menstruating. It is believed that menstruation is due to the sexual act, and that the blood is not dangerous to a woman since it comes from the abdomen and not the heart. 841

When a girl's first menses are over, her father (gawel to her dué) says to her mother (mokul to her dué), "You go make a house for them and fix a camp for them. She is big enough now" (see page 129). 583

After this, a young couple start living together and are recognized

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

as husband and wife. They have been copulating before, frequently with the knowledge of the father and mother, but the latter pretend ignorance.

Usually an older man with a wife or two acquires a young woman in her adolescent period. A young girl often starts living in her husband's household before menstruation. The dué usually takes her for fear of having her stolen from her parents by some other dué. He has no intercourse with her during this period. When the girl is old enough he may without ceremony start actual intercourse. Or he may take her out into the bush on the ruse that they are going fishing. He asks her to get some drinking water or some wood. While she is gone he ties a small piece of opossum fur string around his index finger, and when she comes back he asks her to lie down. He places the finger inside her vagina; then they return to camp, and sexual intercourse starts. This minor ceremony is not frequently practiced.

When an older man takes a pre-adolescent girl he helps the mother perform the ceremony at her first menstruation. After this is over the husband paints her with red ochre (this is always done for mourners after the death of a relative to avoid ceremonial uncleanliness, and is used in ceremonies).

Ordinarily there is but little taboo on a menstruating woman. She sleeps in the same house or camp with her husband, though the couple do not copulate. The only restriction in daily life is that no man would allow a wife or any other woman to go out in a canoe with him during this period, for otherwise the great mythical snake, Bapa Indi (the Great Father), would swallow them all. The story is told that not so long ago a man took his two wives in a canoe for a trip from one island to another. One of them was menstruating. When they had gone for a short time Yurlunggur (Bapa Indi) smelt the unclean odor, came out of the subterranean depths, and swallowed them all. This modern folk tale, which is believed by all Murngin, fits into the tribe's most fundamental myth of the two old creator sisters.

The above describes how a man ordinarily obtains a wife and what usually happens; but often a woman is not taken from her parents for some time because her future husband may be away in the country of a more distant clan. Various men may also dispute the right to her, owing to a gawel's exceeding his rights by promising her to several men, or because of a wrong marriage of the mokul or gawel, with the true gurrong of mokul demanding the daughter and the true waku of gawel claiming her. If the marriage had been according to

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

604 855 When a mother goes away with the father for a trip to distant kinspeople, the older children are left with the mother's sisters, the mother's mother, or the mother's brother. The children turn to the near mothers for food and care with the same feeling as to their own mother.

593 628 A mother is deeply fond of her children. Maritcha saved the life of a young man about fifteen years old when some of the former's clansmen plotted the boy's death. The mother heard of this. Maritcha's clan and her own had had a feud for many years, yet from gratitude she attempted to help Maritcha and stop her own people from fighting him at a later time.

841 When a girl has her first menses the mother helps paint her and take care of her.

861 626 593 There is constant tribal pressure on a mother to be good to her children. No Murngin mother would dare correct her children in the manner of a European woman, for she would be considered cruel and inhuman. Camp gossip and opinion would uniformly condemn her and liken her to an animal. On the other hand, there is less restraint on a son and daughter concerning their mother than in our own society. They frequently curse her, and there is no taboo on the conversation used before her.

604 606 Little arndi (son's wife) occupies a different place in the kinship system, although the general behavior toward her would be the same as toward the true mother (see page 72). Waku in this case would also be a different person. He would be father's sister's husband or husband's father to small arndi.

If a small arndi's husband runs away she goes back to her mokul bapa (husband's mother) until he returns or until she has been given to a younger brother of the husband.

603 *Nati* ⟷ *Kaminyer* (diramo and mielk) (mother's father ⟷ daughter's child)

There are two types of this relationship since there are a female and a male kaminyer and only a male nati. There are five varieties of nati: (1) gawel's and arndi's true father; (2) brothers of this nati; (3) brothers of momo married to marikmo; (4) near nati; and (5) distant nati.

603 835 Nati always feeds his male kaminyer, but not the female because he and she would be afraid people might think he was trying to seduce her. He would also be afraid that she might think so herself. The

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

852 773 *Native Interpretation.*—The forked sticks with the pole across are the house of the two women. The ritual of the women who answer the two snakes and beat the ground with their clubs parallels that of the two old women in Section D. The men in the bush are the snake. The boys who are hanging from the rafter are flying foxes. When the women move back and the men sit down in a line under the rafter, "This means one people, and the rafter is the snake and the people are Muit food.—They are all the same as the birimbir of Bapa himself. —They are Muit and they are one people." When the boys crawl from behind the line of men to one end of the line, they are brought to the tail of Muit and "They are the young snakes of that big one." When the boys crawl up to the head of the snake and receive the food from the head (the Yiritja snake sitting on the forked pole), "This means the children all want food [the children of the snake] and the snake spews out the two women and they [the children] eat it [the two women] and give it back to him [spit out the food again]."

All the above was told to me by the leaders of the Gunabibi, both during the actual portrayal of the ceremony itself and in conversations during the hours of rest between the morning and evening dances.

852 776 825 The significance of the flying fox to the Murngin is that he is a mokoi or trickster spirit of the dead who lives in the bush. He is a generally recognized symbol to all of the spirit that does not go into the water hole but goes out into the bush or the jungle or to the Morning Star Island at time of death (see Barnumbir myth, page 524). —"A flying fox is all the same as the dead spirit from the bush. It is Dua."[16]

852 302 783 J. Ceremonial Purification

1. The men and women paint themselves with red ocher and kangaroo fat. The neophytes are brushed with smoking ironwood branches.

[766 302 841] [16] When an uncircumcised child dies, its mother has the wings of a flying fox painted on her shoulders and the body of the fox painted on her abdomen. "This flying fox is the birimbir spirit of that dead baby. This is done for both Yiritja and Dua mothers and babies." The same painting is sometimes put on a woman when she has had her first menses. The woman is placed inside a hut and, when she wants to move, is given two yam sticks with which to turn over. The yam-stick movement is ceremonial and symbolic of the movement of the two old women who walked with the aid of a yam stick in each hand.

[783] The condition of the boys, or women who are menstruating, of the mother of a dead child, etc., is said to be dja-ak, which means ritually unclean. "If a mother or muri or yeppu sleeps close to dead baby that sweat comes out and makes the mother unclean. Women put red ocher on after this. No one can take food from these women until the bones are dug up and she is painted by her husband with flying fox."

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

the various creatures and plants, created a sacred waterhole, Milmigarak, which later was inhabited by the giant mythical serpent, *wangaruk*.

One day the elder sister, when dipping water from the springs, accidentally polluted it with her menstrual blood.[42] This pollution so annoyed the serpent that he caused the water to boil over, i.e. flow out.[43] Even at the present day, when *wangaruk* becomes annoyed by the presence of unauthorized trespassers, he tries to leave the waterhole. But as soon as his head is visible the aboriginal medicine-men send him back by singing powerful chants, for should *wangaruk* start wandering over the land he would destroy everyone.

Wangaruk is of great length and size. He has a prominent nose, large eyes and a luxuriant beard. His head, however, is entirely bald, having the same appearance as a grey weathered boulder.[44] Although *wangaruk* has a voice like thunder, he does not appear to be associated with either the rain or the rainbow. Only the old men of the tribe are allowed to visit Milmigarak, drink its waters, or catch its fish.

On Pl. 87A the cross-hatched disc in the centre of the painting is the waterhole, Milmigarak. The other discs are non-sacred waters in the surrounding country, and the parallel lines native roads between them. The darker-coloured cross-hatched panels *a*, *b*, etc., represent the menstrual blood of the *Djunkgao* sister which polluted the waterhole.

The Djunkgao Sisters at Milingimbi

This is a fragment of a myth from Milingimbi, which relates how the *Djunkgao* women created a spring of water at Milnur, a place on the mainland, south of Elcho Island.

On Pl. 87D the two women, shown as lizards, with their carrying-baskets beside them, occupy the upper part of the painting. The design below symbolizes the sacred waterhole created by them.[45]

The Djunkgao Sisters at Goulburn Island

Plate 86F depicts a swamp at Goulburn Island which is associated with the *Djunkgao* sisters.

On panel *b* are a number of water-birds catching fish, one of them having a fish in its mouth. Panel *a*, which is similar to the sand-hill design of the *wedjingu mata* of Port Bradshaw,[46] represents the ripples on the swamp caused by the water-birds as they chase the fish.

42. This fragment has been borrowed from the *Warailli* myth, see p. 270.
43. The mythical serpents in the Oenpelli area cause their waterholes to overflow when they are annoyed (see p. 208, p. 218, etc.).
44. The head of the mythical serpent living in the spring near the Elcho Island mission station is said to resemble a stone.
45. This design is similar to that used for the sacred wells, shown in Pl. 87A. This may be a *mata* design belonging to a *dua* language group (see Fig. 61P).
46. The same design is present on a crayon drawing dealing with *Djunkgao* at Port Bradshaw. Berndt, 1952, Pl. 7.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
O117 Murngin O117

however, the people to whom Laintjung had given his sacred designs and *rangga* were sorry for what they had done, and made the "likeness" of Banaitja in paperbark bound on a framework of cane. The influence of Laintjung and Banaitja, in spite of their importance, did not cover such a wide area as that of some other Ancestral Beings; and the aborigines account for this by explaining that Banaitja "was killed at an early age, before he had the opportunity of travelling widely throughout this region".

Most of the great religious myths of this region are associated with the *dua* moiety, the more conservative section; it is the *jiritja* which embraces new and "alien" ideas and activities. From time to time, fully-initiated *dua* and *jiritja* men are shown the "high" *rangga*, and through the years they become increasingly familiar with the complex ritual. This admission to sacred knowledge, however, is not thought comparable to an initiation or age-grading ceremony: it is more in the nature of a revelation through which they become acquainted with the inner substance of religious thought and expression. The *dua* Wauwalak myth, on the other hand, is of general importance, and is associated with the three sacred "age-grading" ceremonies of this north-eastern region. There is also much sacred ritual not concerned with age-grading. Both *dua* and *jiritja* men take part in this, and it incorporates some purely *jiritja* songs belonging to separate cycles.

The two Wauwalak sisters are associated with the concept of fertility, owing mainly to their connection with birth, after-birth blood, and menstruation. The latter receives a great deal of attention in Yirrkalla thought. Aboriginal women are all potential Wauwalaks; and a great deal of their behaviour, particularly at puberty, and when menstruation ceases at pregnancy, is said to be based on that of the Two Sisters. The Wauwalak myth is most important to these north-eastern Arnhem Landers, and they make frequent references to it. It has, as mentioned, far more general application than have the Djanggawul and Laintjung cycles; and the three separate ceremonies which concern it here are each of a different nature. The commonest is the *djunggawon*, used primarily for initiation; ideally, it extends over a couple of months, and includes, in addition to circumcision and camp dancing, a certain amount of ritual which is not fully revealed, as in the case of the Djanggawul. The second of these three ceremonies is the *kunapipi*, which will be dealt with in the following chapters. The third is the *ngu:rlmak* ceremony, performed to-day only at rare intervals. It is considered to be far more important than either the *djunggawon* or the *kunapipi*, but less so than the Djanggawul and Laintjung *dua* and *jiritja nara* rituals.

There are also a number of subsidiary ceremonies, related in some degree to these two main cycles, but not by any means so outstanding.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

773 she sprayed water outwards and upwards to form many rain clouds.

The two sisters, who were sitting down, saw these clouds forming into one, threatening rain. But they did not suspect that Julunggul had sent them.

"You had better get some stringy-bark, so that we can make a hut", said the *gungman* to her sister. "It's going to rain."

"All right, sister"; and the younger went out to cut sheets of bark. The older sister was still not strong enough to do any heavy work.

After the *wirlkul* had made several journeys, bringing back sheets of bark, the two constructed a simple hut; they lit a fire in the doorway, and went inside to rest. By this time it was sunset, and the rain began to fall, washing the coagulated blood from the ground into the sacred well. The Julunggul stirred in discomfort, seeing the streaks of blood on the surface of the water.

When it was dark, Julunggul emerged again from her well; holding high her head she spat out lightning, one vivid flash after another, until the Wauwalak crouched together in fear, calling out at each flash. (This lightning is said to have been different to that normally seen; but the women didn't know it was caused by the Snake. "They thought it was from cloud.")

After the lightning, the Julunggul slowly and deliberately came out of the well, dragging her sinuous body. But at first, pleased that the lightning had finished, the Wauwalak did not see her.

Gradually the Snake drew nearer to the cleared place around the bark hut, her eyes protruding like great lights searching out the women. Then suddenly the Wauwalak saw the Julunggul, and began to cry out.

"What are we going to do?"

"We'd better dance to keep her away."

So the *wirlkul* began to dance, to hinder the Snake's progress. She moved gracefully, shuffling her feet, swaying her body from side to side, and holding in her hands feathered string from which she made cats-cradles as she danced. This particular dancing is called *keiweijun*, for as the girl danced she called out *kei'wa ! kei'wa !* (Go away! Go away!)[4] The Julunggul stopped in her course, and watched the dancing. But the girl grew tired, and called out: "Come on, sister, your turn now: I want to rest".

The older sister came from the hut, leaving her child in its cradle of soft paperbark, and began to dance. But her blood, still intermittently flowing, attracted the Snake further; and she moved towards them.

[841] [778]

3. In contradiction to this, menstruation and afterbirth blood is usually described as *marelin*, or sacred, and so could not "pollute" the well. There is the suggestion that the snake found the blood attractive. This concept will be discussed later in a detailed study of the Wauwalak.

4. *Vide* R. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, Chapter IV, Sections IV, V and VIII.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

and this symbolized menstruation blood. The latter is translated colloquially in this region as "spring blood", a menstruating woman being known, in translation, as a "spring woman". 773 [841]

There the two women sat, the younger menstruating, and the older with an intermittent flow of afterbirth blood.[8] It was at this time that Julunggul smelt the blood, emerged from the well to swallow the Sisters, and made rain. [844]

When the Wauwalak saw the rain clouds gathering, the elder sister said: "Well, young sister, you had better run down and get some paperbark so that we can finish this *murlk*".

"No, sister", replied the other. "I have the same as you (that is, blood flowing); it is a very happy time, for this is my first menstruation. It's not like you, sister, you know about it because you have had it before, but this is my first time. I'm not going to go from this hut. I'm going to look after your daughter, while you yourself go out for bark. You know, if I go it might run all over the place. I can dig a hole in the middle of the *murlk* and let my blood flow into it, then no one can see it."

"All right", agreed the older sister. She went out and collected more stringy-bark, and at the same time obtained yams and animals for food, as in the above version. She was able to collect these easily, for she had a good hunting dog called *Djirawa* (the name meaning, "a black cloud during dry weather time"). She returned to the camp with the food and bark.

They made fire and began to cook this food, but it all "flew" away in turn to the sacred well. The younger sister asked the other, "You know why all these animals have run away?"

"I don't know", was the answer. "There might be something in this place (that is, something sacred). Something might come along to our camp." It was at about this time that the Snake, who had been watching them, sent out lightning. . . .

The sequence of events int his version has been changed, but the final section conforms to the first story.

The next version is illustrated by a detailed drawing (see Plate VI and "key" text figure 1) depicted in red, yellow, blue, green and black crayon on brown paper,[9] a substitute for stringy bark, the normal medium, by two Ri:radjingu men named Mauwulan and Wondjuk (father and son), the former being the headman for the Wauwalak cycle. 773 532

8. Said by aborigines to continue for about two days after child-birth.
9. Reference: No. 105, Feb. 4th, 1947, Book 18, Series A, R. Berndt.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

as far as the women in the main camp are officially concerned, are "swallowed by the Snake". Theoretically, they are not supposed to return to the society of women until they are re-born at the end of the Kunapipi. Old men "chase the Snake back" into the sacred ground, where it swallows the initiates; thus they avert the disaster of the whole main camp's being swallowed by Julunggul. This part of the ritual reveals a propitiatory aspect; the initiates "are given" to the Julunggul in order to save the rest of the camp.

Later that night the men return, having left the boys in the protection of their guardians; they tell the women (particularly the initiates' mothers, mothers' sisters and mothers' mothers), "All the young boys have gone to-day; Julunggul has swallowed them up". And the women wail, singing the clan songs of the initiates, as if they were dead. In practice, the women do wail, as they do in the *djunggawon* when the boys are taken out to the sacred ground by the men; but in theory it is said that "the women don't cry, for they might become sick", since Julunggul might be antagonized, thinking the women objected to her methods. "She might return and swallow them too".

On the two following nights, the same events take place: Julunggul comes towards the camp, her voice is heard, and more young initiates are taken out. This continue until all the initiates are collected on the sacred ground; and a sequence of totemic dancing takes place, "teaching" the young boys. Some of this dancing takes place before dawn; intermittent singing and acting continue all night, while the women return the calls of the men from the main camp, or cry out when they hear the hum of the bullroarer. The cry of the women is the cry of the Wauwalak when they saw Julunggul; and when they dance, their dancing is similar to that of the Wauwalak, trying to stop the progress of the Snake. The *jiritja* snake men dance to represent the snakes who watched Julunggul swallowing the Wauwalak. The totemic animals, birds and vegetables that are sung and danced at morning and evening rituals are those seen by the Wauwalak, or collected by them for food. These, it will be remembered, became *mareiin*, sacred, when they left the Wauwalak and joined their ceremonial leader, Julunggul, in Muruwul well.

A little later the men, who have spent part of the evening on the sacred ground, leave this place, and dance with lighted paperbark torches towards the main camp. On their way they meet the women, crouched under conically shaped mats, termed *ngainmara*.[5] Two old women walk up and down, calling out the names of foods which at

5. The *ngainmara*, made of plaited pandanus, is now rarely seen in native camps of this region, having been superseded by blankets. It was once (as mentioned in Chapter I *c*) an important part of a woman's equipment, used for providing shade, for a protection against mosquitoes and sandflies, and for a temporary shelter for a menstruating girl. Symbolically, it represented the uterus, and this aspect is treated in detail in the Djanggawul cycle. (*Vide* R. Berndt, *Djanggawul*, for publication).

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OII7 Murngin OII7

the mound piled beside the *ba'uma*. When the Wauwalak actors see the Snake, they act as if "they are shamed", here termed *g(w)o:ra'nganbinganbi*. They are "shamed" because they have the child, and their blood is running.[9]

When this dance is over, two *dua* men bring out a pole from the darkness of the bush beside the sacred ground, and hold it horizontally, waist-high from the ground, on the concave side of the *ba'uma*. Within the crescent trench lie the young boys, and on the opposite (the convex, though sometimes on the concave) side of the *ba'uma* the *jelmalandji* stand, held by two men. Then, to the ritual crying of all participants, the *jelmalandji* are pushed over so that they hit the pole and tumble to the ground. They are picked up, and pushed over again; this is repeated several times, until the feathered ornaments on top of the *jelmalandji* fall off. The Julunggul are falling over, after swallowing the Wauwalak.

Then the young boys are removed from the *ba'uma* and placed on the mound beside it, while the *jelmalandji* are put in their place. Fire-sticks are thrown into the *ba'uma*, to burn the grass and paperbark surrounding the central poles of the *jelmalandji*. At the same time men open their arm veins, sprinkling blood on one another and into the trench; this is the blood of the Wauwalak, and blood itself symbolizes life. Rows of dancing men come down the sacred ground and along the shallow trench, to and around the *ba'uma*, pushing the mound into the trench and gradually filling the hole, until the earth from dancing feet covers the *jelmalandji*, and the ground is flattened "so that no one will see that trench".

This completes the main section of the Kunapipi: the sequence of these rituals may be changed according to the inclination of the totemic leaders, or some may be omitted.

* * * *

This is followed by two concluding features: the ceremonial exchange of wives, and the return of the young boys into secular camp life. The latter always takes place at Yirrkalla; but local aborigines say that the former is less common, and it does not seem to be well integrated with indigenous social behaviour. Mission pressure has been brought to bear, in recent years, on the performance of the Kunapipi, and especially on ceremonial intercourse; but it is still practised at Millingimbi and Rose River, and away from white supervision on the settlements.

In other parts of the Territory where Kunapipi holds sway, and where "Big Sunday" is an integral part of native religious life, ceremonial copulation brings these rituals to a climax. It represents a

9. The word "shame" signifies "shyness", the normal feeling a menstruating woman feels towards a man who observes her blood. The European cultural connotation is lacking in this pidgin translation of the native term.

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

773 tence and immutability of the "eternal" Beings, a religious philos-
796 ophy has been developed among the mature "thinkers" of the group.
789 This finds its outlet in the mental exercise of meditation, interpre-
794 tation, and explanation, but is nevertheless restricted by the deep faith that is a living part of all its manifestations. Within the limitation of defined premises, a certain degree of flexibility is apparent; philosophic concepts have not remained static, nor ideology stagnant. Throughout the centuries of religious development, alien ideas [177] have been considered and discussed, even when they were unorthodox, and apparently opposed to indigenous theology. They have been accepted or discarded; but all have, in this way, served to illuminate and extend the basic principles which serve to explain to the aborigines man's place in his environment, and his inter-relationship with the "Divine" Beings who are possessed of the power of animation and are the seat of knowledge.

796 Several interesting points are raised in our description of Kunapipi ritual.

In all Kunapipi ceremonies, throughout the whole region mentioned in Chapter II, basic words referring to the sacred objects, ceremonies, and so on, are very much the same; for instance, *nanggaru*, *kanala*, *jelmalandji*, *djamala*, *gumagu*, and *djepalmandji*. [184] These terms serve as a connecting link, for their meanings do not change drastically from one area to another, even when, as at Yirrkalla, the Kunapipi ritual itself has been superimposed on a relatively indigenous theme. The dominating theory behind the Kunapipi has preserved, more or less intact, its original intent.

562 Another outstanding aspect is the important rôle undertaken by
796 women throughout the performance of the Kunapipi ceremonies. At no time do they feel themselves secluded from purely male activity, while at intervals they take an active part. They know that the rituals are principally concerned with peculiarly feminine functions, and that men are carrying out the more strenuous features of ceremonial life. "These rituals," said one informant, "are just like a man copulating with a woman, he does all the hard working so that the woman can carry out the really important business of childbirth." This may be a one-sided attitude, but it does adequately express local native reasoning in this matter. The question of whether women are profane, as opposed to the aura of sacredness pervading a male participant at such a ceremony, does not enter into Yirrkalla thinking. Even when ritually tabu because of afterbirth or ● [841] menstruation blood (as in the case of the Wauwalak at the sacred Muruwul billabong), a woman is regarded as sacred, for her blood and her other activities themselves are sacred, and are focal points in the religious doctrine. And all sacred ceremony, these aborigines [773] say, was inspired by women. "In the beginning men had nothing, and women possessed all the ritual; so men stole this from the women ..." —(Djanggawul and Wauwalak mythology).

live in the single men's camp. The brother-sister tabu, which is very strict, now comes into operation, and his sisters as well as his mother are prohibited from eating any of the game that he kills and which is now known by a special term, *kälŋboi*. But he still receives vegetable food from his mother and from certain other female relatives which he reciprocates with gifts of fish, honey or "sugar bag" and any other food the eating of which is not restricted by *kälŋboi* tabus. Later as he acquires status and the tabus upon the game he kills are removed or relaxed, he will make regular reciprocal gifts of animal food to his *ŋandi* and to the other female relatives upon whom, prior to his marriage, he was dependent for vegetable food. 262 431 593 602 883

The division of labour is well-marked. The chief task of the woman, besides the bearing of children, is the collection and preparation of vegetable food and of shellfish, as well as such small game as rats, bandicoots, opossums and *kuku*, "sugar bag", the honey of the small black native bee (*Trigona* spp.), as she may glean by the way. Each woman works for her own family group—her husband and children—but some of the food that she obtains may also be sent to relatives to whom she has obligations defined by kinship. Others again may be prohibited from partaking of this food because of their kinship or other status at certain stages of their own or the woman's relationship to the society. Most of the food obtained by a woman during menstruation is tabu to certain relatives—particularly to her brothers. Contrary to the general idea the main food supply among aborigines, except at certain restricted seasons of the year, is not animal, but vegetable, and in Arnhem Land upwards of sixty food plants are known. Some of these are local and are obtained more or less casually and in small quantity. But a comparatively small number, which 222 462 [594 602] 222 262 [602] [841]

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17

159 to feed her [give her to him]"; but if he is a greedy fellow he says, "No, I
584 want to keep her myself."

159 The black man's custom is different from the way white men are. A
[583] black man takes a wife when she is very young, sometimes before her
593 breasts have come. He sleeps with her, loves her, and does everything but
[826] have intercourse with her. This makes his girl want him and makes her breasts come large and start sticking out. That is before her blood comes.
[841] When blood first comes to a woman it is after she has copulated with a man for the first time. That is what causes it. She has blood a few more times, and then she has a baby, and then the blood stops.

159 If my wife gave me no children, I would go to my gawel and tell him. He
587 would say, "Wait a little while and I will give you another daughter of mine
595 so that you can have children." If my wife died, my father-in-law would give me another one right away. If he hasn't a grown daughter, he would wait until his little one got larger and then he would give that girl to me.

159 When my second wife got large enough her father and mother brought
595 her to me and said for her to stay with me and that I was her husband (pages 95-96). My first wife [the new wife's older sister] did not growl at me but kept very quiet when I was around. When I was away she growled at her little sister and told her to go on away. "Mahkarolla belongs to me and not to you." By and by my new wife told me about this. She also told her mother and father.

[626] They said to my first wife, "You must stop this quarreling with your sister. She is just the same as you. You are our daughter and she is our daughter. You have Mahkarolla for a husband, and we have given her to him and she has him for a husband. She is your young sister. You will now have someone to look out for the wood for you, and she can help you get food for your husband."

My wife kept quiet then. Those two sisters live together just like good friends. They never fight like the wives of some husbands do. They look out for each other's children.

159 When another gawel liked me he went to my proper father-in-law and
584 said, "I like that son-in-law that belongs to you. I would like to give him my daughter. He can be a son-in-law of mine, too." My gawel, because he is a good man, said, "You haven't promised that girl of yours to somebody else, have you?" If that man had said, "Yes," mine would have said, "No, you can't because that will make trouble for my son-in-law." That man said, "No," so my father-in-law said, "Yes."

159 My mother-in-law—I don't talk to her. I can't go close to her camp, can't
606 go pick up something close to her camp, can't take food from her. I can't give food to her straight; I must give it through my wife. When I am

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

775 763 hundred miles away, and it was thought that two Yirrkala men had been killed. The men who were with me immediately supported the tidings with the evidence of the fires in the bush, that had obviously been lit by the mali of the dead men, who had travelled the hundred miles to inform their friends.

775 Unexpected and distant smoke is at times considered to come from mali camp-fires. Without consciously contradicting the statement that mali are spirits, Yulengor complacently attribute unrecognizable footprints and other physical functions to them. An unknown canoe carried in on the tide or found on an island is accepted as having been used by mali when hunting or fishing.

562 881 Women have been assigned a very inferior place in aboriginal society, and it almost seems that they attend some ceremonies to focus attention on the men. But at least one ceremony is carried out entirely by women, at the coming of a first menstrual period.

A young wife, on recognizing the menarche, informs her mother, who then forbids her to leave her windbreak. Food and water are brought to her, and most likely she will [285] curl up in her 'nganmurra', or cone-shaped mat, till she [305] recovers. She is painted with two bands of clay below the shoulders, and red, yellow, and white vertical lines are made between these bands. Whenever menstruation recurs, 362 women smear themselves with ochre and painstakingly ●841 abstain from eating men's food. Dugong, turtle, fish, and [302] birds are regarded as men's food, and men are expected to [462] spear them; women content themselves with collecting yams, roots, and shellfish. With undisguised chagrin, a wife in this temporary quarantine will sit with her husband and his wives round the camp-fire, painted red and with her back turned, and will nibble a yam or shellfish whilst the family consume turtle, kangaroo, or fish.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

If a woman secretly hunted for men's food at such a time, she would bring trouble on herself and relatives, and the species of game she killed would become scarce; when the men caught nothing they would say: 'Some woman must have eaten food here', and within a few hours every woman in the locality would be expected to produce an alibi. The life of her husband would be in jeopardy and sooner or later misfortune would overtake him. In offering condolence to an injured man, sympathizers will observe that, as there seems to be no apparent cause for his misfortune, his wives have probably violated this food law.

In bush camps men have a lot of time on their hands, and if a man strolls into a friend's camp he can be sure of a welcome and a remarkable display of polite consideration. If the host has been fishing, he will share the food with his visitor, totally ignoring women and children in his camp. He will remark that there are more fish if his visitor would care to stay and share them, or, if he shows signs of leaving, the largest and best will be pressed on him and the host may even give him a spear or spear-thrower as well. When I asked why such ostentatious gifts were made, I was assured that it was customary, and that the man sitting alone in his camp, except for his wives and children, is inordinately pleased when a friend visits him, and the gifts help to express his goodwill and friendliness.

On the other hand, aboriginal farewells are never prolonged. At the conclusion of a visit, or when leaving the home camp for an extended period, the men continue their discussions till the women, children, and dogs have started out. Men then terminate their visit by nonchalantly remarking: 'I'm finished; I'm going.' Nothing more is said on either side, and they leave.

'My word, Naratjin, you have a fine boy there. He has